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THE VICTORIAN ERA

BY

SAMUEL INSULL

SPEECH MADE AT THE VICTORIA DAY LUNCHEON OF THE PRINCE OF WALES CHAPTER OF THE IMPERIAL ORDER OF DAUGHTERS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, AT THE AUDITORIUM HOTEL, CHICAGO, MAY 20, 1916

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THE VICTORIAN ERA

By Samuel Insull

I feel a great sense of embarrassment when I appear before an audience mainly composed of ladies. With one exception, this is the only occasion upon which I have been called upon to address an audience composed of women, and I can assure you that it is a very different thing to addressing an audience of men. My experience is that it is pretty difficult to keep the attention of one of your number; and to hold the attention of this large assemblage is somewhat beyond me. But still it is a pleasure to be here, and to see before me so many faces of those who claim birth in the dear old country across the water; and it is a pleasure to talk to you upon this particular occasion, the day that has become famous around the globe, the birthday of Queen Victoria, now celebrated by the British people the world over.

To me and to those of my age in this room the 24th of May means but one thing. It is the Queen's Birthday, the birthday of *The* Queen, and probably for all time the woman who will be looked upon, whatever may be the brilliancy or ability of her successors, by those of us born during her lifetime, as *The* Queen.

It is some ninety-seven years since the day of her birth; seventy-nine since she ascended the throne as a young girl; seventy-eight years since she was crowned, and some seventy-six years since she married Prince Albert, and brought to Eng-

land one of the most devoted men who ever served the British Empire.

The Queen and the Empire

Consider what has happened during what is called the Victorian Era, during the period of the Queen's reign. In times like this, when the old country is so beset with trouble, it is well to remember that the Victorian Era was noted above everything else for the development of the arts of peace. I think we may all hope that in the years of the twentieth century corresponding to the years of the nineteenth century of the Victorian Era the British Empire may again be engaged in fifty or sixty or seventy years of peace, and that the people who have responded so nobly to the mother country in the day of her peril will have the opportunity to reap the rewards of peace that we all of us, in this room, at any rate, feel confident will follow the victorious conclusion of the great struggle now going on.

I think it was Justin McCarthy who says in the "History of Our Own Times" that Queen Victoria was the first constitutional sovereign to occupy the throne of England, and that, taking it as a whole, she was by far the best of those who have occupied that throne.

Consider the improvements that came in the Victorian Era in the morals and manners of our race, in the drinking habits, in the greater diffusion of comfort, in the methods of travel, in the transmission of intelligence, including the government postal service, in the spread of public education, in the study and application of science, in invention and in commerce, in industry, in medicine and sanitation, in law-court procedure, electoral reform, and in every character of public improvements.

Think of the enormous expansion of the British Empire that took place during the era of Queen Victoria. Imperialism probably can date from the latter end of Queen Victoria's reign. It was a realization of what the British Empire was intended to bring about. The federation—if not actually governmentally, in spirit and in action—the federation of the Eng-

lish-speaking commonwealths grew up during the period of Queen Victoria's reign.

Instance Australia, the birthplace of the distinguished president of the occasion. There were only about 200,000 white people in Australia when Queen Victoria came to the throne. There were nearly five millions of people, of whom all but a very small percentage were of British birth or British lineage, on the Australian continent at the time of her death; and within the last eighteen months the Australasian colonies have sent to the help of the motherland almost as many troops as the total population of Australia at the time that Queen Victoria came to the throne.

What the British Empire Means

The opening months of Queen Victoria's reign were marked by rebellion in Canada. The close of her reign saw Canada one of the most loyal and influential portions of the Empire.

In Africa and in India also there were great additions to the British Empire, and a great enhancement of its prestige, during the Victorian Era. A writer in the Encyclopædia Britannica says, referring to the beloved Queen: "When she died, one square mile in four of the land in the world was under the British flag, and at least one person out of every five persons alive was a subject of the Queen."

The area of the British Empire is about 12,000,000 square miles out of 52,500,000 square miles of land surface on the earth. The population of the United Kingdom in 1841, just after Queen Victoria came to the throne, was only a little over 25,000,000. Today it is between 47,000,000 and 48,000,000, and the population of the whole Empire is estimated at about 400,000,000.

To show the growth of the British Empire in the Victorian Era, it may be mentioned that the British possessions during that time in surface probably more than doubled, and in wealth a great deal more than quadrupled. The British Empire at this time produces one-third of the coal, one-sixth of the wheat and nearly two-thirds of the gold supply of the world.

Consider some of the material things that our race has benefited from during the Victorian Era. In looking up some data I find that the first railway journey taken by Queen Victoria was in June, 1842. She traveled from Windsor to Paddington on the Great Western line, and in relation to this incident a writer relates the following amusing anecdote:

The master of the horse, whose business it was to provide for the Queen's ordinary journeys by road, was much put out by this innovation. He marched into the railway station several hours before the start to inspect the engine, as he would have examined a steed. Great amusement was occasioned by the Queen's coachman, who insisted that, as a matter of right, he ought to make believe to drive the engine. After some dispute he was told that he might climb on to the pilot engine, which was to precede the royal train; but his scarlet livery, white gloves and powdered wig suffered so much from the soot and smoke that he made no demand for his rights after that trip.

That is relatively a short time ago. If you will just recall, in the one matter of transportation, Chicago today is a great deal nearer the City of London, even in these hard times of travel, than Edinburgh was at the time that Queen Victoria ascended the throne.

Commerce and Invention

Take the growth of the merchant marine of Great Britain —a mighty important subject in these days when the Kaiser's submarines are engaged in the fruitless task of destroying it. The tonnage in 1837 was 2,800,000. The tonnage at the present time is about eight to ten times that; it is somewhere near 20,000,000 tons; and I think it will take a mighty long time, whatever may be the activities of the submarines, to reduce that tonnage to any very considerable extent.

Speaking of the mercantile marine of Great Britain, it is rather interesting to note that the number of ships destroyed by England's enemies following the year of the Battle of Trafalgar was about double as many as the Kaiser's submarines

have managed to sink in the last year. Naturally at this time the tonnage is much greater and the value very much greater; but it is very doubtful whether the relative value of the tonnage sunk in the last year is any greater, when you bear in mind the difference in size of the British mercantile marine, than was the tonnage sunk the year after the Battle of Trafalgar.

The first experimental telegraph line was built in England the year Queen Victoria came to the throne (1837). The first public line, under the direction of Wheatstone and Cooke, was laid from Paddington to Slough, near Windsor, on the Great Western Railway, in 1843, the year after Queen Victoria took her first railway journey.

Submarine telegraphy was not perfected until years later. It was during the latter half of the Victorian Era that the present ocean cables were constructed. The first cable was put in, if my memory serves me right, in the year 1858 or 1859, and failed. Service was permanently established under the Atlantic Ocean, owing to the efforts of Mr. Cyrus Field of New York, in 1867, and has been in operation ever since. Wireless telegraphy was a product of the Victorian Era. In fact, if you will go over the whole history of transportation, of communication by signals, of communication by word of mouth over the wire, that whole development has revolutionized the relations of the people of the world, and it took place during the period that Queen Victoria was on the throne.

The Making of History

Great constitutional changes came in Queen Victoria's time. Great Britain did not know what real representative government was, as we understand it today, and as the world understands it, until after the Queen came to the throne. The Reform Bill of 1832 gave some concessions in the direction of public representation, but it was not until Queen Victoria had come to the throne some fifteen or twenty years that the franchise was extended generally to small property owners and householders.

Mentioning the principal events during Queen Victoria's reign, the Chartist riots of 1839 should receive attention. The demands made at that time by the radical Chartists would seem to be very conservative if such demands were being made today.

The repeal of the Corn Laws led to a radical change in the fiscal system of the United Kingdom and the building up of England's vast commerce with all the world.

The first International Exhibition was a great historical event. It was held at South Kensington in 1851, the land that the exposition occupied at that time being just south of the Albert Memorial, which most of you who go to London know so well.

The Crimean War took place in 1854-1856, when England and France and Italy were fighting their present great ally, Russia, and probably were laying the basis of a great many of the troubles which we have had in the past and are having today in Southeastern Europe.

The Indian Mutiny was in 1857 and 1858, when the valor displayed by the small body of Englishmen there aroused the admiration of the world. Following the mutiny, the reorganization of the administration of India, and bringing it in line with the wise administration that has been so generally adopted during the Victorian Era in England's crown colonies, gradually led to that loyalty which found its final expression in the autumn of 1914, when the Indian troops, at a moment of very great necessity, came across the world to France, and fought for the Empire.

All of us are familiar with the later events of the Victorian Era and with the creation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India. At the time that Earl Beaconsfield suggested it, the proposal met with a great deal of criticism, but the probability is that that act was the start of the closer relations that have grown up beween England and not only her crown colonies, but her great self-governing colonies throughout the world.

I might go on talking for a long time about the things that have been given to the world by Queen Victoria, and the great

era during which she reigned; but you have other speakers to hear from, and I will draw my remarks to a close.

But before I sit down, I want to talk on one subject that I always try to refer to whenever I appear before people who have the same blood that I have flowing in my veins and yet who have made their homes in this country.

A Word to Americans of British Birth

I think that we American citizens of British birth—and I imagine that most of you ladies, especially the older ones, are either married to American citizens, and are consequently American citizens yourselves by act of marriage, or else you are the mothers of young men who are growing up as American citizens, and young girls who will probably marry American citizens—I think that the greatest thing that we of British birth, whether we come from the mother country or the colonies, can do at this time, when this country is more or less wrought up over the rival views and rival positions of some of her citizens—I think the greatest service that we can render, not only to this country, but our mother country, is to be in every respect true to the oath of allegiance that we took when we became citizens of this country.

I can only repeat to you what I said a few weeks ago to the Sons of St. George Society. We owe a great deal to this country. We owe everything to it except birth, and what we all love so much, that liberty which was given us by the mother country, from which we spring. But we owe our opportunities in life to this country. We do not want to be British-Americans here; we do not want to be English-Americans or Irish-Americans or Scotch-Americans. We want to be Americans!

The country that we come from has given the world the best form of constitutional government. The country that we have adopted and that we live in, and to which we have sworn allegiance, is carrying out constitutional government in the most liberal and democratic way that it is possible to carry it out under the conditions that exist here. What we want to do is to work for one thing. We want to work for the per-

petuation of the great race from which we spring, and unless this great democracy is a success and can go along hand in hand with the English-speaking peoples of the world after all these troubles are over, the institutions which the country of our birth gave the world, and which the country of our adoption has so wonderfully utilized, must fail. What we need here, above everything else, and what will be needed throughout the English-speaking world above everything else, whether it is under the Stars and Stripes, or under the Union Jack, is the assimilation of all races who live under these flags. And we, as American citizens, if we fulfill our duty, our obligations of citizenship, will see to it that there is no "hyphen" used in discussing us as a class, and that in dealing with our duties as citizens of this country, we have but one thought in mind, and that is acting the part of true citizens of this great republic and performing the duties of citizenship as may appear to us as citizens of the United States of America.

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